

THE DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
AND THE AFRO-ROMANCE INSTITUTE PRESENT:

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“Race and Romance in the Sugar Plantation:
Romantic Ecology in Gómez de Avellaneda's
Sab (1841)”

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2015
4:00 – 5:30 PM
ROOM 113 ARTS & SCIENCES BUILDING

There will be a reception immediately following the event, open to the public.

In “Al partir,” one of her most memorable sonnets, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, a transatlantic writer bridging Cuba and Spain, pictures her native island as idyllic Paradise, a trope prevalent in the Cuban literary tradition since Columbus’ *Diary*. This talk traces the movement from “edén querido” to “edén perdido” in *Sab* (1841), the first anti-slavery novel in the Americas, a work written by the young Gertrudis shortly after her arrival in the continent. The talk focuses on the author’s spatial imagination and the role played by nature in the novel, topics that have gone largely unnoticed; it argues that the intersection of race and romance affects the picturing of Cuba as edenic space. It then highlights the role played by Sab in voicing the author’s romantic ecology, her melancholy at the loss of an insular Paradise due to the interlocked system of colonialism and slavery. This fresh approach to a classic work revives notions of race and national identity in Cuba and a broader Caribbean context, and points to an added, but overlooked, dimension in the novel as harbinger of the ecological damage brought about by the sugar plantation.

Sponsored by: The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the Afro-Romance Institute.